

June 26, 2007

The Honorable David M. Walker

Comptroller General

U.S. Government Accountability Office

441 G Street, NW

Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Walker:

Over the past several years, the Department of Defense (DOD) has been increasing its focus on stability operations-related activities in the African continent. Both the U.S. Central and European Commands engage with countries within the continent under many programs and initiatives related to theater security cooperation and combined military training exercises.

However, it is not clear whether these efforts are integrated into a cohesive, comprehensive, and unified effort within and between the DOD, the Department of State, other federal agencies, and international and regional partners.

Most recently, the DOD has initiated actions to establish a new combatant command for Africa, which is intended to be a major step toward unifying the U.S. Government approach to stability operations activities in the continent. The department is taking steps to establish initial operational capability of the African Command by October 2007 and full operational capability by October 2008.

As the DOD continues to develop and expand its stability operations capabilities in Africa, the Committee is concerned that the department's efforts be fully integrated and aligned with other elements of our national resources, reflect a comprehensive U.S. strategy, and that corresponding capabilities needed for success be identified and addressed. In light of the importance of successful stability operations goals and objectives – which include stabilizing regions to prevent hostilities from developing and denying sanctuaries for forces and organizations hostile to the United States – and the fiscal implications associated with such a significant undertaking, the Committee requests GAO to evaluate the U.S. government's efforts in this area.

Specifically, the Committee requests GAO address the following questions:

(1) On what basis did the executive branch decide which U.S. government department was best suited to take the lead on stability-related activities in Africa, including efforts to prevent hostilities from developing?

(2) What is and will be the magnitude of the DOD stability operations activities in Africa, and to what extent are these programs and initiatives coordinated, integrated and reflective of a cohesive national strategy?

(3) To what extent are best practices for interagency and multinational coordination being identified and adopted by the DOD as it organizes and establishes the new African Command?

(4) To what extent has the DOD considered and planned for operational requirements at each stage of stability operations, i.e., focusing on not only military operations but also shaping and deterring as well?

(5) To what extent has the DOD determined the appropriate location, size, and resources required for the African Command, and how will this new command affect the current size and resource requirements of other combatant commands?

(6) To what extent has the DOD identified the personnel and training implications related to expanded stability operations capabilities – such as language and cultural training of military personnel that engage with local populations, and how does the department plan to address these needs?

We appreciate your prompt attention to this request and look forward to the results of this important study. Please contact Andrew M. Wright on the Majority Subcommittee staff at (202) 225-4771 and A. Brooke Bennett on the Minority Committee staff at (202) 225-5074 to discuss your plans for this engagement.

Sincerely,

John F. Tierney

Chairman,

Subcommittee on National Security

And Government Reform

Christopher Shays

Ranking Member,

Subcommittee on National Security

And Government Reform